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C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 001156

SIPDIS

EAP/MTS – M. COPPOLA
DRL/IRF – J. MORALES OR N. BADAT
IO/HR – A. OSTERMEIER OR C. NEVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2019
TAGS: UN PHUM UNGA SN
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE EXPLAINS ITS SUPPORT FOR DEFAMATION OF
RELIGIONS RESOLUTION

REF: STATE 122639

Classified By: E/P Counselor Joel Ehrendreich for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) Singapore MFA Deputy Director for International,
Social, and Development Issues Daryl Sng welcomed Poloffs'
delivery of reftel talking points and supporting materials on
December 4, noting that Singapore values such inputs from the
United States. Sng said Singapore understands the United
States' concerns about the defamation of religions resolution
pending before UNGA, and he promised to circulate the
materials Poloffs provided and ensure that MFA discussed U.S.
concerns with Singapore's missions in New York and Geneva.
Sng cautioned, however, that Singapore has consistently voted
in favor of the defamation of religions resolution and
continues to believe that it has good reasons to support the
resolution.

¶2. (C) Referencing Singapore's recent Third Committee "yes"
vote for the defamation of religions resolution, Sng said
that Singapore almost never changes its vote between the
Third Committee and the General Assembly. Sng noted that
Singapore's Geneva delegation gave a public explanation of
its Third Committee vote on November 12 and said that
explanation remains valid as a statement of Singapore's
reasons for supporting the resolution.

¶3. (U) BEGIN TEXT OF NOVEMBER 12 SINGAPORE STATEMENT IN
THIRD COMMITTEE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my delegation had
voted in favor of the resolution combating defamation of
religions on the understanding that this resolution applies
to all religions. Singapore is a multiracial and
multi-religious city-state. We believe that it is critical
for us to ensure that our diversity of religions, cultures,
and races does not become a source of misunderstanding or
friction. Hence, we firmly believe that the exercise of free
speech cannot happen at the expense of others. Such freedoms
come together with responsibility and accountability.
Defamation breeds intolerance and distrust and, more
importantly, undermines societal harmony and cohesion and has
no place in any society. Intolerance and ignorance should be
discouraged, even as we seek to inculcate moral respect and
harmony for one another in order to carry out civilized
discourse. Singapore takes this opportunity to reaffirm our
support for efforts to combat religious defamation. We
appreciate and recognize the value of diversity and we must
do what we can to combat intolerance. Thank you.

END TEXT OF NOVEMBER 12 SINGAPORE STATEMENT IN THIRD COMMITTEE

¶3. (C) Comment: Given Singapore's long-held views and
established domestic practice, Post believes Singapore is

highly unlikely to vote against, or abstain from voting on, the defamation of religions resolution in the foreseeable future. Singapore at times practices strict control of speech on religious subjects as a means of protecting social order by ensuring that inflammatory hate speech is not directed against ethnic or religious minorities (typically the Malay-Muslim minority). The government routinely invokes the memory of deadly communal riots in the 1950s and 1960s as an admonition against permitting such speech. Moreover, Singapore has in the past restricted freedom of expression where religious matters are concerned; recently, for example, authorities convicted a couple (Christian members of the ethnic Chinese majority) of sedition and jailed them for several weeks for distributing religious tracts deemed offensive to Muslim sensibilities. End Comment.

KENGOTT

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